

Mgmt.; and former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Cochairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

Remarks Following a Visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor's Jeanne Jugan Residence

December 18, 2007

Listen, thank you all for welcoming us. Laura and I are honored to be with you. Sister, thanks for your hospitality, and more importantly, thank you for showing the Nation what is possible when people with loving hearts reach out to a neighbor in need. It is easy to feel the great compassion of the sisters here in this hall as you help make somebody else's Christmas a joyous time of celebration.

First, there are volunteers here in the community who have taken time out of their busy schedules to volunteer to help somebody. And that's one of the messages of the Christmas season: that I hope our fellow citizens reach out and find a neighbor in need, find out somebody who needs a loving pat on the back, or somebody who could use a little help in learning how to read, or an elderly citizen who wants to know that somebody cares for them. It doesn't take much effort; it takes a little prioritization. And during a season in which we count our blessings, I would hope those of us who are blessed help somebody else.

And there's no better place to come to see that happening than right here. The Little Sisters of the Poor are renown for their great hearts and wonderful compassion. Isn't that right, Archbishop? *[Laughter]*

And so Laura and I are thrilled to be here with you all. I do want to thank the volunteers—high school students, some going to the schools nearby, some home-schooled, who have heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

I want to thank you all for making cards for our troops in harm's way. As I worked the tables, I was most thankful that people here said that they pray for our troops, the safety of our troops. And so do I. And so

does Laura. And one way to let our troops know that people care deeply about their safety and their well-being is to send them a Christmas card, which you all are fixing to do here. So I thank you for that as well.

I finally want to thank our musician. *[Laughter]* The man hadn't lost a step. *[Laughter]* Thank you, sir, for your beautiful—I particularly liked "The Eyes of Texas."

And so we say to you all, Merry Christmas. May God continue to bless you. May God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you for your hospitality.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mother Benedict de la Passion (Armstrong), Superior and president of the Jeanne Jugan Residence, Little Sisters of the Poor; Donald W. Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington; and Joe Dignazio, resident, Little Sisters of the Poor.

Remarks on Signing the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007

December 19, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated. Mr. Secretary, thank you for that introduction. We're all pleased to be here at the Department of Energy. I particularly want to thank the employees here for their daily efforts to help our country meet its energy needs. Thanks for your hard work. Sam, thank you for your leadership.

As Sam mentioned, I firmly believe this country needs to have a comprehensive energy strategy, and I appreciate the Members of Congress for understanding that as well. Two years ago, I was pleased to stand with Members—many of whom are here—to sign a bill that was the first major energy security legislation in more than a decade. At the time, I recognized that we needed to go even further. And so in my State of the Union, I proposed an aggressive plan to reduce oil consumption of gasoline by 20 percent over 10 years.

Today we make a major step with the Energy Independence and Security Act. We make a major step toward reducing our dependence on oil, confronting global climate

change, expanding the production of renewable fuels, and giving future generations of our country a nation that is stronger, cleaner, and more secure.

I do welcome members of the Cabinet who've joined us. I particularly want to thank the Speaker and the leader. I appreciate your leadership on this important issue. Speaker Pelosi is here with Congressman Steny Hoyer, House majority leader. Welcome, Mr. Leader. Leader Reid has brought Members of the Senate with him: Senator Inouye, Senator Bingaman, Senator Stevens—I think that's Senator Domenici there in disguise with a—*[laughter]*. Looking pretty handsome, isn't he? I appreciate Congressman Dingell and Congressman Markey, Congressman Gordon. These are all leaders on their respective committees that helped bring this bill to my desk. I also want to welcome all the other Members of Congress who have joined us.

One of the most serious long-term challenges facing our country is dependence on oil, especially oil from foreign lands. It's a serious challenge. And Members of Congress up here understand the challenge, and so do I. Because this dependence harms us economically through high and volatile prices at the gas pump, dependence creates pollution and contributes to greenhouse gas admissions. It threatens our national security by making us vulnerable to hostile regimes in unstable regions of the world. It makes us vulnerable to terrorists who might attack oil infrastructure.

The legislation I am signing today will address our vulnerabilities and our dependence in two important ways. First, it will increase the supply of alternative fuel sources. I proposed an alternative fuel standard earlier this year. This standard would require fuel producers to include a certain amount of alternative fuels in their products. This standard would create new markets for foreign products used to produce these fuels. This standard would increase our energy security by making us less vulnerable to instability—to the instability of oil prices on the world market.

The bill I sign today takes a significant step because it will require fuel producers to use at least 36 billion gallons of biofuel in 2022.

This is nearly a fivefold increase over current levels. It will help us diversify our energy supplies and reduce our dependence on oil. It's an important part of this legislation, and I thank the Members of Congress for your wisdom.

Second, the legislation also—will also reduce our demand for oil by increasing fuel economy standards. Last January, I called for the first statutory increase in fuel economy standards for automobiles since they were enacted in 1975. The bill I'm about to sign delivers on that request. It specifies a national standard of 35 miles per gallon by 2020, which will increase fuel economy standards by 40 percent and save billions of gallons of fuel. This bill also includes an important reform that I believe is essential to making sure that we realize this strategy. It allows the Department of Transportation to issue what are known as "attribute-based standards," which will assure that increased fuel efficiency does not come at the expense of automobile safety. This is an important part of this bill, and again, I thank the Members for taking the lead.

The bill also includes revisions to improve energy efficiency in lighting and appliances. It adopts elements of the Executive order I signed requiring Federal Agencies to lead by example in efficiency and renewable energy use.

Taken together, all these measures will help us improve our environment. It is estimated that these initiatives could reduce projected CO₂ emissions by billions of metric tons. The U.N. climate change meeting in Bali last week—our Nation promised to pursue new, quantifiable actions to reduce carbon emissions. Today we're doing just that. The legislation I'm signing today will lead to some of the largest CO₂ emission cuts in our Nation's history.

The legislation I'm about to sign should say to the American people that we can find common ground on critical issues. And there's more we can accomplish together. New technologies will bring about a new era of energy. So I appreciate the fact that Congress—in the omnibus spending bill that I'm going to sign later on—recognizes that new technologies will help usher in a better quality of life for our citizens. And so we're going

to spend money on new research for alternative feedstocks for ethanol. I mean, we understand the hog growers are getting nervous because the price of corn is up. But we also believe strongly that research will enable us to use wood chips and switch grass and biomass to be able to develop the ethanol necessary to help us realize the vision outlined in this bill.

I appreciate very much the fact that we're going to fund additional research on new battery technologies to power plug-in hybrids. We're spending money on innovative ways to capture solar power. We're making—providing incentives for nuclear energy. If we're serious about making sure we grow our economy and deal with greenhouse gases, we have got to expand nuclear power.

It is going to take time to transition to this new era. And we're still going to need hydrocarbons. And I hope the Congress will continue to open access to domestic energy sources—certain parts of the Outer Continental Shelf in ANWR. And to protect us against disruptions in our oil supply, I ask Congress to double the current capacity of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

With these steps—particularly in the bill I'm about to sign—we're going to help American consumers a lot. We'll help them by diversifying our supplies, which will help lower energy prices. We'll strengthen our security by helping to break our dependence on foreign oil. We'll do our duty to future generations by addressing climate change.

And so I thank the Members of Congress. I appreciate the fact that we've worked together, that we can show what's possible in addressing the big issues facing our Nation. This is a good bill, and I'm pleased to sign it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. at the Department of Energy. H.R. 6, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 110–140.

Remarks on Signing a Bill To Prevent Taxation of Payments From the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund to Virginia Tech Victims and Families

December 19, 2007

It's my honor to welcome the president of Virginia Tech, the mayor of Blacksburg, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and, of course, distinguished members of the congressional delegation, here as I sign a bill that's going to help the folks who suffered mightily on that day when a gunman killed their loved ones. It's a good piece of legislation. I appreciate members from both parties working on it.

And I asked the President how—what the spirits are like there at Virginia Tech, and he said they're strong. And I'm not surprised. Having been there for that memorial ceremony, I left with the distinct impression that of all the communities in America that could deal with a tragedy, it's the Virginia Tech community.

And so I want to say to the families who still suffer, we think about you. And to the students and faculty and alumni and leadership of Virginia Tech, thank you for helping those who suffer reconcile and recover from the grief they feel. So it's my honor to sign this important piece of legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charles W. Steger, president, Virginia Tech; Mayor Ron Rordam of Blacksburg, VA; and Governor Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia. H.R. 4118, approved December 19, was assigned Public Law No. 110–141.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops and Their Families at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland

December 19, 2007

The President. Admiral, thank you very much for your hospitality. You know, it's a great honor to come here. It's an honor to see the troops who have been wounded; and it's an honor to hug their families; and it's an honor to see the fabulous care that these folks receive. You know, our citizens wonder